

# Exploring Point of View

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Point of view** is the perspective from which a story is told. To determine a story's point of view, ask yourself, "Who is telling the story?"

Although there are many options available, short story writers usually stick to a single point of view within one story.

## TYPES OF POINT OF VIEW

**Omniscient** The point of view is called "third person omniscient" if the author is outside the story and presents the thoughts of all the characters involved as an objective observer:

*When Jane saw Bill jogging past her house, her heart skipped a beat.  
When Bill saw Jane in the hallway at school, he fought hard to catch  
his breath. No doubt about it—it was love!*

**Limited** The point of view is "third person limited" if the author tells the story from the viewpoint of just one character:

*When Jane saw Bill jogging past her house, her heart skipped a beat. She  
thought by the way Bill looked at her in the hallway that he liked her, too.*

The point of view is "first person limited" if the character narrates his or her own experience directly:

*When I see Bill jogging past my house, I think I'm going to faint. I think  
I have the same effect on him. Do you think this means we're in love?*

## THE NARRATOR VS. THE AUTHOR

If a narrator is telling the story, readers must be careful not to confuse the narrator's attitude with the author's. Often authors create a character to act as narrator who expresses far different attitudes than those they hold themselves.

**The "unreliable" narrator** Sometimes authors even create a narrator who gives the reader clues that he or she is not to be trusted as a reliable source of information. It then becomes the reader's job to decide the "real truth" beneath the unreliable narrator's lies or distortions.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE YOU ARE READING A SHORT STORY:

1. Who is telling the story? What point of view has the author chosen?
2. If the story is told by a narrator, are there any clues that the narrator's attitudes might be different from the author's? Are there any clues that the narrator might even be an unreliable source of information?